

ADDRESS  
OF THE  
**American Convention**  
FOR PROMOTING THE  
ABOLITION OF SLAVERY  
AND  
IMPROVING THE CONDITION  
OF THE  
AFRICAN RACE,  
ASSEMBLED AT  
PHILADELPHIA,  
IN JANUARY, 1804,  
TO THE  
PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES.



PHILADELPHIA;  
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*AMERICAN CONVENTION*

FOR PROMOTING THE  
ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, &c.

TO THE  
PEOPLE  
OF  
THE UNITED STATES.

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FELLOW CITIZENS,

THE American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and improving the Condition of the African race, assembled for the purpose of deliberation upon such matters as relate to the design of their institution, believe it their duty to address you at this time: not with a view to descant upon the horrors of slavery, or its incompatibility with sound policy, with justice, with morality, and with the spirit and doctrines of christianity: for besides that the circumscribed nature of such an address necessarily precludes lengthy animadversion, these are topics, which have been so repeatedly and ably discussed, as to leave little room for additional argument or new illustration.— The feelings and the judgment have been often addressed with all the strength of reason and the pow-

ers of eloquence, and although prejudice may blind the eyes of some, and avarice close the avenues of sensibility in others, we derive consolation from the assurance, that the wise and the good, the liberal and the considerate of all classes of the community, lament the existence of slavery, and consider it as a dark stain in the annals of our country. We do not even hesitate to believe, that many who hold slaves by demise, acknowledge the injustice of the tenure; but perplexed in the contemplation of the embarrassment in which they find themselves, they are ready to exclaim, "What shall be done with them!" We would willingly include these among the number of our friends, and entreat them to unite in the removal of an evil so justly and almost universally deplored.

A principal object of our concern, is to rouse the attention of the public to the continued---may we not say---increasing necessity of exertion. We fear many have taken up an idea, that there is less occasion now than formerly, for active zeal in promoting the cause of the oppressed African: but when it is remembered that there are about nine hundred thousand slaves in our country! that hundreds of vessels do annually sail from our shores, to traffic in the blood of our fellow men! and that the abominable practice of kidnapping is carried on to an alarming extent! surely it will not be thought a time for supineness and neglect. Ought not rather every faculty of the mind to be awakened? and in a matter wherein the reputation and prosperity of these United States are so deeply involved, is it possible that any can remain as indifferent and idle spectators?

The gross and violent outrages committed by a horde of kidnappers, call aloud for redress. We

have reason to believe, there is a complete chain of them along our sea coast, from Georgia to Maine. Like the vulture, soaring in apparent indifference, while watching for his prey, these shameless men, disguised in the habiliments of gentlemen, haunt public places, and at night seize and carry off the victims of their avarice. The Convention are informed of some of their insidious manoeuvres. They generally have vessels moored in small rivers and creeks, and after stealing the unprotected, they decoy by stratagem and allure by specious offers of gain, such free persons of colour as they find susceptible of delusion. Others residing near the sea-coast, are continually purchasing slaves in the middle states, to sell at an advanced price to their compeers in infamy. For the victims of this shocking business, they find a ready market among the southern planters. The design of this detail, must be obvious : It is to excite the vigilance of every friend to humanity and to virtue, in the detection and punishment of these monsters in the shape of men.

To complain of injustice, or petition for redress of grievances, cannot be mistaken for rebellion against the laws of our country. We lament therefore the existence of statutes in the state of North Carolina, prohibiting individuals the privilege of doing justice to the unfortunate slave, and to their own feelings, by setting him at liberty ; and we learn with the deepest regret, that the state of South Carolina has recently repealed the law prohibiting the importation of slaves from Africa into that state. Such appears to be the melancholy fact ; but we cannot restrain the involuntary question—Is this possible ? Is the measure of iniquity not yet filled ? Is there no point at which you will stop ? Or

was it necessary to add this one step, to complete the climax of folly, cruelty, and desperation? Oh legislators! we beseech you to reflect, before you increase the evils which already surround you in gloomy and frightful perspective!

Beholding with anxiety the increase rather than diminution of slavery and its dreadful concomitants, we earnestly request the zealous co-operation of every friend to justice and every lover of his country. It is an honourable, a virtuous, and a humane cause in which we have embarked. Much good has already been effected, but much remains to be done; and, under the divine blessing, may we not confidently hope, that in proportion to the sincerity of our motives, and the temperate, firm, and persevering constancy of our exertions, will be our success, and peaceful reward. Those who live contiguous to the sea-ports, in particular, we wish may be stimulated to vigilance, that none of those shameful acts of atrocity adverted to, may elude deserved punishment; and our fellow citizens of the eastern states are respectfully invited to pay attention to the clandestine traffic in slaves, carried on from some of their ports. Such daring infractions of the laws of our country require prompt and decisive measures.

Many aspersions have been cast upon the advocates of the freedom of the Blacks, by malicious or interested men; but, conscious of the rectitude of our intentions, and the disinterestedness of our endeavours, we hope not to be intimidated by censure from performing the part assigned us. We frankly own, that it is our wish to promote a general emancipation; and, in doing this, it is our belief

we essentially promote the true interests of the state : Although many inconveniencies may result from a general liberation of the People of Colour ; yet those which flow from their continuance in slavery, must be infinitely greater, and are every day increasing. It is, therefore, in our estimation, desirable that this object should be brought about with as much speed as a prudent regard to existing circumstances, and the safety of the country, will admit : But in all our endeavours for its accomplishment, we hope to move with care and circumspection. We pointedly disavow the most distant intention to contravene any existing law of the states collectively or separately---We will not knowingly infringe upon the nominal rights of property, although those rights may only be traced to our statute-books ; and while we desire to be supported in our endeavours to defend the cause of the oppressed, we hope that discretion and moderation will characterize all our proceedings. We feel with others the common frailties of humanity, and, therefore cannot expect an exemption from error. The best intentions are sometimes inadvertently led astray ; a lively zeal in a good cause may occasionally overleap the bounds of discretion : although therefore individuals may, in some instances, have suffered their zeal to exceed knowledge, yet we repeat, that the line of conduct which we approve, and which is consonant with the spirit and design of our institutions, is in strict conformity with a due submission to existing laws, and to the legal claims of our fellow citizens. On this ground we think we have a just claim to the countenance and support of all liberal minds---of all who delight in the real prosperity of their country, and in the multiplication of human happiness.

We conclude in the expression of a hope, that the Supreme Disposer of events, will prosper our labours in this work of justice, and hasten the day, when liberty shall be proclaimed to the captive, and this land of boasted freedom and independence, be relieved from the opprobrium which the sufferings of the oppressed African now cast upon it.

By order of the Convention,

MATTHEW FRANKLIN, *President.*

ATTEST,

OTHNIEL ALSOP, *Sec'ry.*

Philadelphia, 1st month, (January) 13th, 1804.

THE END.

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Solomon W. Conrad—Printer.  
No. 22, Pewter-Platter Alley.

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